UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2002/SR.1
25 March 2002

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Fifty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 18 March 2002, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairperson: Mr. DESPOUY (Argentina)

Chairperson: Mr. JAKUBOWSKI (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON declared open the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

2. Reporting on his term of office, he said that the Commission's officers had maintained constant contact with each other between the sessions and also with other relevant bodies of the United Nations system. They had carried out no fewer than 11 major tasks, including the appointment of special rapporteurs and of two independent experts to engage in studies on such important topics as the elaboration of an international instrument for the protection of persons from enforced or involuntary disappearances and the forthcoming optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Their intersessional work had greatly increased and the time had, perhaps, come for an explicit recognition of the fact.

3. Relations with the special rapporteurs, the treaty bodies and the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had been most productive. Such contacts were an excellent way of coordinating activities and thus strengthening the protection of human rights.

4. The Commission had become one of the best known of human rights bodies: at its fifty-seventh session, it had been addressed by 5 heads of State and over 80 high dignitaries. Its high profile meant, however, that it was constantly putting its credibility to the test. Its working methods should, therefore, adapt to the changes in its standing. Complaints should be dealt with more vigorously and speedily and there should be less selectivity. Objective parameters for the characterization of conduct revealing serious or systematic human rights violations should be drawn up.

5. Much had happened during the past year. The situation in the Middle East had deteriorated and continued to do so. There had been hundreds of deaths and no peace efforts, although steps towards negotiations had recently been taken in the form of the proposal by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, which, it was to be hoped, would lead to a lasting peace. In that connection, he welcomed the recent Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), with its vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, lived side by side.

6. The terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 provided a graphic illustration of the destructive power of irrationality and had shaken up the traditional ideas of security. There had followed the war in Afghanistan; the reconstruction of that country would present a new kind of challenge for the United Nations.

7. Armed conflicts had, for the most part, worsened and, in many of them, the illegal recruitment and participation of children were on the increase. The Commission should call on all States to ratify International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 (1999) concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. Inter-ethnic and religious conflicts had also increased throughout the world.

8. In his own country, the collapse of the economy and the resultant fury of the population at the loss of its savings had led to the fall of a democratically elected Government. Some of the actions that had occurred had endangered Argentine institutions and undermined the country's democracy. Argentina had rigorously applied the macroeconomic prescriptions of the world's leading financial institutions, and had paid the price for dismantling the State and undertaking a crash course in deregulation and privatization. Moreover, the conditions on which international assistance would be based might lead to even greater political instability.

9. The main lesson to be drawn from that situation was, as he had said in his inaugural address to the Commission, the importance of economic, cultural and social rights in strengthening democracy and the social fabric. In that address, he had expressed his profound concern at the growth of world poverty and its negative impact on human rights. The disparity between those who had everything and the growing number of those who had nothing was the cruellest and most disturbing aspect of the current globalization phenomenon.

10. One theme that would surely be frequently mentioned at the Commission's current session was the importance of respect for human rights in combating terrorism. Even when dealing with people who respected nothing except their own criminal motives, States should respect at the very least the international human rights standards. In the past, many Latin-American Governments had, by fighting the devil with his own weapons, merely turned the region into a vision of hell. The rule of law was essential in combating terrorism, not only on moral grounds but also on the purely practical grounds of preventing the generalization of violence and of isolating the terrorists.

11. There had been some positive changes on the international scene, such as the progress made by the open-ended working group on the right to development, and the Government of Mexico was to be commended for organizing the International Conference on Financing for Development which had just begun its deliberations. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations in the person of its Secretary-General bore witness to the Organization's standing in the world. The fact that the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court would shortly come into force was a most important development. The imminent entry of Switzerland into the United Nations would be of great assistance to the Organization's work.

12. The independence of East Timor, which was due to be declared on 20 May 2002, was also of enormous significance. In January 2002, he had had the opportunity to visit the country and speak to political leaders, officials and large numbers of people who had suffered during the tragic events of 1999. After two years of peace, East Timor's experience deserved support and, indeed, could serve as a model for United Nations participation in the resolution of conflicts.

13. He welcomed the decision by the President of Indonesia to set up an ad hoc tribunal to try persons accused of human rights abuses in East Timor and the announcement that the sentences of the persons convicted of murdering three United Nations officials in West Timor had been increased. The normalization of relations between the peoples of East Timor and Indonesia, and the credibility of the Indonesian authorities, would depend on the outcome of the trials before the ad hoc tribunal. The willingness of those authorities to cooperate in investigating the murder of the Dutch journalist, Sander Thoenes, in Dili in 1999 was also to be commended.

14. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance had presented the human rights community with a most difficult challenge. It should, however, be remembered not for its public vicissitudes but for its outcome: an extremely comprehensive and interesting document that would serve as a guide for national and international activity in combating discrimination. As for the follow-up, it had been agreed that he would himself write a report on the status of discussions on candidates for the five positions of eminent experts to consider the follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

15. He wished to commend the growing number of countries welcoming the Commission's representatives and special rapporteurs. Visits by himself to the Russian Federation, particularly the Chechen Republic, and to Colombia, had been planned but his country's political circumstances and the Organization's financial difficulties had prevented the visits from taking place.

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

16. Mrs. ROBINSON (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the current session was the last time she would address the Commission as High Commissioner for Human Rights. When she had agreed to extend her term of office, she could never have imagined how challenging a period the extra year would be. The events of 11 September, which she had characterized as a crime against humanity, had had a profound impact on the world and, in a very particular way, on the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

17. The past year had highlighted once again the importance of having a strong and independent Office with a principled commitment to the universal application of human rights standards and the integrity to stand up and speak publicly about those issues in all States, even in the most difficult circumstances. Her voice might have been considered awkward at times, but she had always tried to follow the advice of the Secretary-General to "stay an outsider within the United Nations". Those words had been echoed, and welcomed, by human rights activists and supporters throughout the world, and she was grateful to the Secretary-General for his trust and support.

18. The events of 11 September 2001 had been of monumental consequence for the people of the United States and the victims, who had come from more than 80 other countries. Yet they had also represented an attack on the very system of international relations on which the Commission and the entire work of the United Nations was based. The buildings that had been destroyed could be replaced, but if the pillars of the international system were damaged or demolished they would not be so easily restored.

19. The foundations of that system lay in the Charter of the United Nations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the corpus of standards that flowed from that historic statement of principles and goals provided the structure within which the system had developed. The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights had affirmed the integrity of the structure by recognizing the indivisibility of the individual's human rights and the legitimacy of international

concern for their protection. More recently, the United Nations Millennium Declaration had renewed the pledge of international cooperation in the context of a globalizing world and the acceptance by States of their collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level.

20. Those international human rights standards were at some risk of being undermined and the Commission had a particular responsibility to defend them vigorously. Her Office had interacted constructively with the Counter-terrorism Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). She had encouraged the Committee's members to circulate additional guidelines drawing the attention of Member States to the importance of adhering to the international human rights standards and to consider adding a human rights expert to the panel already assembled. It was the Commission, however, that had the primary responsibility to safeguard those standards, and she invited its members to consider whether it might be possible to establish a mechanism to monitor States' implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) from a human rights perspective. She offered full OHCHR support in that regard. It was important to remember that terrorism called for a response based not only on legislative and security measures but also on the armoury of common values, standards and commitments on universal rights that defined the world as one global community and made it possible to overcome differences.

21. Given the rise of Islamophobia and of expressions of anti-Arab and anti-Semitic sentiments in the wake of the events of 11 September, the valuable Programmes of Action that had emerged from the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations needed to be fully implemented by all States. She was pleased that the General Assembly had given its support to the Anti-Discrimination Unit, which would provide a solid foundation for the work of OHCHR in combating racism and discrimination.

22. She had recently visited Afghanistan, a country that stood at a crossroads. After years of war and darkness, its people wanted to return to a time without abuse by their own leaders, the ability to choose their own destiny without foreign interference, and restoration of their place in the family of nations. International Women's Day in Kabul had been a remarkable opportunity to celebrate with the women of Afghanistan their determination to claim their rights and proper place in Afghan society.

23. A total of 90 people, including members of the Interim Administration, the Loya Jirga Commission and civil society from around the country, had participated in the first Afghan national workshop on human rights, convened in Kabul with the support of OHCHR and the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, to plan implementation of the core human rights provisions of the Bonn Agreement. The Chairman of the Interim Administration, Mr. Karzai, had taken a significant step during the workshop by announcing his commitment to establishing a truth commission to uncover the atrocities committed over two decades of war and to hold the perpetrators of past abuses of human rights accountable. Her Office was committed to assisting Afghanistan in that endeavour.

24. OHCHR was also committed to providing technical and financial support for the four standing working groups set up to focus on the establishment of an independent human rights

commission; accountability and transitional justice; human rights education; and women's rights. They would provide important links between the Interim Administration and civil society and a useful framework for discussing the best mechanisms for ensuring respect for the rule of law and human rights in Afghanistan.

25. The most pressing need in Afghanistan was human security. Kabul was relatively stable, thanks to the efforts of the International Security Assistance Force, but the rest of the country remained unsafe. Killing and looting was going on in the north, particularly, and women had told her that the militias currently in control of the area had subjected them and their young daughters to multiple rape. Mr. Karzai had sent a three-member commission to the area to examine the situation. The responsibility to restore human security lay with the Interim Administration, but she believed that, until it could effectively protect the people of Afghanistan, it was imperative to extend the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force beyond Kabul. The decommissioning of weapons was an urgent priority.

26. For the past two years, she had been engaged in a dialogue with the Russian authorities on the situation of human rights in the Republic of Chechnya of the Russian Federation. The authorities had provided her with information on many questions and, most recently, with detailed information on the investigation and prosecution of cases of alleged crimes committed, among others, by the military against civilians. While the small number of convictions was not yet commensurate with the scale of the allegations of serious human rights abuse and much remained to be done, there had been movement in a positive direction.

27. She welcomed the invitations to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict to visit Chechnya. It was vital that invitations should also be extended as a matter of priority to the mechanisms on internally displaced persons, extrajudicial executions and torture. It was a matter of grave concern that reports continued to be received of serious abuses on both sides of that conflict. It was time to stop the cycle of violence. Both sides should sit down in good faith to seek a political settlement to the problems of Chechnya.

28. In May 2001, OHCHR had embarked on a human rights needs assessment for the Central Asia region, with a view to formulating a programme to assist the countries of the region in developing their national capacities to protect and promote human rights. Kazakhstan had received an expert delegation from OHCHR in December, and further missions were currently under way in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Support from the offices of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the region had been heartening and she hoped for a positive response from the Government of Turkmenistan concerning a similar delegation.

29. She had recently visited Egypt, Bahrain and Lebanon. She welcomed Bahrain's decision to accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The people of Bahrain deserved the encouragement and support of the international community as they embarked on a challenging national programme that covered the establishment of a democratically elected legislative body, women's rights to vote and to stand for election, the separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and safeguards for individual rights and freedoms.

30. Her discussions in the region had also focused on the worsening cycle of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories. Regrettably, the efforts of the international community, including those of the Commission, had not brought an end to the hostilities and Palestinians continued to be subjected to a wide range of human rights violations related to the ongoing occupation. Israel also continued to suffer from deliberate killings of civilians. She reiterated her call for international observers to be present on the ground as a deterrent to the violations of human rights in the occupied territories and also to promote human security against suicide and other attacks on Israeli civilians.

31. In Sierra Leone, her Office had been supporting the transition from conflict with technical cooperation in connection with the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She hoped donors would respond generously to her recent special appeal for resources to make it possible for that Commission to commence work as planned on 1 June 2002.

32. Zimbabwe had recently conducted a difficult election. On the African continent, some observers had declared their satisfaction with the election process, while other African observers had pointed to very serious flaws. The Commonwealth group, among others, had condemned political violence by government supporters. Before the election, she had expressed concern at the violence, intimidation and lack of respect for the rule of law and other democratic norms in Zimbabwe. Perhaps most worrying was the devastating effect that the political situation had had on the economic well-being of millions of poor Zimbabweans and its broader impact on Southern Africa. At a time when African leaders were coming together under the umbrella of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) - an initiative based on concepts of democracy, responsibility and good governance - such developments were particularly unwelcome. She hoped the Commission would find a way to address the issue from a human rights perspective.

33. The protracted conflict in Colombia had been lent a new urgency by the breakdown of the negotiation process between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the recent assassination of Archbishop Duarte in Cali. Her Office was prepared to assume a larger monitoring role on the implementation of human rights and international humanitarian law throughout the country.

34. It was essential to continue to strengthen institutions in East Timor, which was looking forward to the full exercise of sovereignty in May 2002. OHCHR had engaged in a technical cooperation project with the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) to strengthen national infrastructure for the promotion and protection of human rights, involving human rights training for police officers, judges, prosecutors, public defenders and lawyers.

35. Technical cooperation between OHCHR and the Government of Indonesia regarding the prosecution of human rights violations committed in East Timor in 1999 had been suspended,

pending revision of the Presidential Decree establishing an ad hoc human rights court. The court's jurisdiction was limited under the Decree to cases arising from the violence that had taken place after the popular consultation held on 30 August 1999 and excluded human rights abuses that had occurred prior to that date. Depending on how the current trials proceeded, however, it might be possible to offer technical support in the future.

36. The OHCHR programme of technical cooperation in China would continue with earlier work on human rights training for police, punishment for minor crimes and human rights education. New areas of work included training for judges and lawyers and prison administrators, activities in the provinces to promote economic, social and cultural rights, fellowships and support for academic institutions. While cooperation with China was progressing well, she had found it necessary to raise a number of human rights concerns with the Chinese authorities during her visit of November 2001.

37. OHCHR activities at the regional level had been strengthened by the appointment of regional representatives based in the United Nations regional commissions and in subregional institutions, so as to enhance the ability of OHCHR to serve and assist the Member States. Experience had shown that such a presence would enable her Office to be more efficient, more responsive to requests for advice, and more conscious of the need to follow up activities agreed upon under the regional human rights frameworks. Regional representatives would also provide much needed support for the work of OHCHR with United Nations country teams and help deepen contacts and cooperation with international, regional and non-governmental organizations.

38. OHCHR had continued to work with its United Nations partners over the past year to build further momentum around a human rights mainstreaming agenda. A number of expert meetings and seminars had been organized on issues such as human rights and the environment, bioethics and trafficking, and the Human Rights Strengthening (HURIST) joint programme had been revised in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Steps had also been taken to strengthen the work of OHCHR with United Nations country teams. Human rights specialists were becoming a standard component of peacekeeping and other United Nations operations.

39. Field work was an essential dimension of her Office's activities, whether in connection with the human rights elements of peacekeeping and peace-building or with respect to its own field presences. OHCHR staff on the ground - often working in very difficult and challenging circumstances - played an important role at the national level in creating or strengthening capacities and infrastructures for human rights promotion and protection.

40. The Secretary-General had recently launched a new phase of his plans to strengthen the United Nations and to make it a more effective organization capable of addressing the principles and priorities set out by world leaders in the Millennium Declaration. Part of that process would involve a comprehensive management review of the working methods and functions of OHCHR, to be carried out by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). She welcomed the opportunity that would provide to move forward with the management of change process she had initiated in 2000, to evaluate the dynamic state of the United Nations human rights programme and to strengthen its capacity to further the Millennium Declaration priorities.

41. She recalled that, some years previously, the Commission had reviewed its own mechanisms. The true strength of such an institution was, however, determined by the values of its members as much as by the efficacy of its procedures. She wished to put forward an idea for consideration by the members of the Commission: that membership brought with it obligations as well as rights. It was not a question of legal obligations, which were already set down in international law and common to all. The point she wished to make was that, although the obligations established by the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights applied to every State, they should be felt most keenly and applied most rigorously by those which sat as members of the pre-eminent human rights forum. The Commission had a distinguished history of achievement, but for it to continue to enjoy the trust and respect of the broader international community, including civil society, then membership thereof should be clearly seen as meaning more than the protection of national interests.

42. The practical question that arose, however, was what the Commission's members could or should do to advance its credibility and its reputation.

43. One answer might be that States should use their period of membership to consider adhering to those human rights instruments to which they were not yet party and improving compliance with their treaty bodies reporting obligations. A growing number of States - 35 to date - had agreed to issue a standing invitation to all thematic rapporteurs. It would be a strong message if that list of States were to include all the members of the Commission.

44. It was also important to consider how the Commission's work at its current session would relate to other forthcoming United Nations events that were crucial to the realization of human rights around the world, such as the International Conference on Financing for Development, which was currently beginning in Mexico, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which would be holding its first session at United Nations Headquarters in New York in May 2002, and the special session of the General Assembly on children, also to be held in May 2002. There were clear links between human rights, children and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg in August 2002: though all might agree on the idea of sustainable development, the question remained whether enough had been done to ensure that the planet would be fit for future generations.

45. Lastly, there was no doubt that the Commission had a heavy responsibility to take the lead in upholding international human rights standards in a new world environment threatened by terrorism and facing even the possibility that weapons of mass destruction might be deployed. She wished its members every success in their deliberations and looked forward to supporting them in the challenges they would face during the session.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (item 1 of the provisional agenda)

46. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON invited the Commission to take up item 1 of its provisional agenda (Election of officers).

47. Ms. CEK (Croatia), speaking on behalf of the Eastern European Group, nominated Mr. Jakubowski (Poland) for the office of Chairperson.

48. Mr. NOGAWA (Japan), speaking on behalf of the Asian Group, Mr. AYEWOH (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the African Group, Mr. VEGA (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, and Ms. VIDRICAIRE (Canada), speaking on behalf of the Western European and Others Group, supported the nomination.

49. Mr. Jakubowski (Poland) was elected Chairperson by acclamation.

50. Mr. Jakubowski (Poland) took the Chair.

51. The CHAIRPERSON invited nominations for the three offices of Vice-Chairperson and for the office of Rapporteur.

52. Mr. VEGA (Chile), speaking on behalf of all the regional groups, nominated Mr. LEWALTER (Germany), Mr. NEME (South Africa) and Mr. SALLOUM (Syrian Arab Republic) for the offices of Vice-Chairperson and Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil) for the office of Rapporteur.

53. Mr. Lewalter (Germany), Mr. Neme (South Africa) and Mr. Salloum (Syrian Arab Republic) were elected Vice-Chairpersons by acclamation and Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON

54. The CHAIRPERSON, having paid tribute to the work of the outgoing Chairperson and Bureau and expressed his gratitude for the dedication which the High Commissioner had brought to her office, thanked the Commission for the honour it had done to his country which had always supported the quest for freedom and justice and shown its devotion to the values of human rights.

55. The tragedy of 11 September 2001 had made it clear that the international community must be ready to face new challenges and, as the Secretary-General had stated to the Commission in 1998, that new emphasis must be placed on prevention. Universal values based on human rights played a role second to none in international relations and were the foundations of peace, justice, development, good governance, poverty reduction, growth, development and the prevention of conflicts. The quest for justice and the defence and promotion of human rights were at the heart of the Commission's mandate and it had therefore become one of the most important organs of the United Nations, as evidenced by the range of issues it discussed, the growing number of world leaders who appeared before it and the large number of delegations and eminent persons from civil society who participated in its work.

56. He recalled the vision that had led to the development of the Charter of the United Nations and noted that the initial task of the Commission in 1947 had been the drafting of an international bill of human rights which would have three main parts: a declaration, followed by treaties and then by measures of implementation. The first two parts had been achieved but implementation continued to be a challenge and everything possible must be done to ensure the full implementation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. That initial vision had led to the development of principles and standards and the Commission, more than ever,

must be governed by the human rights norms it had itself helped develop and its members, while representing Governments, must also make a personal commitment to upholding and defending human rights in accordance with the Commission's mandate.

57. Cooperation based on dialogue and the willingness to listen to others were essential for the Commission to work effectively. The need to accept compromises from time to time should not be seen as negative but rather as a means of moving forward together. The Commission, during the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, should set an example and make dialogue among civilizations one of its trademarks with a view to abolishing the hierarchy of civilizations and cultures. Within a context of shared values such as freedom and tolerance and respect for human rights, cultural and religious diversity should be a source of strength, not a cause for division or confrontation. Without a dialogue within and between civilizations and cultures, global prosperity could not be ensured, progress could not be sustained, and peace could not be lasting.

58. International cooperation must serve the needs of international protection efforts. The United Nations had set standards for international protection in cases of gross violations of human rights and the Commission should look closely at its protection activities and consider how international cooperation could work for their benefit. International protection efforts should be one of the basic principles of the culture of human rights and a key element of the dialogue between civilization and cultures. The promotion of human rights was not a vehicle for the uniformization of the world; on the contrary, the culture of human rights ensured protection for national cultures, religion and indigenous traditions.

59. Throughout the world, millions of people were victims of poverty, trafficking or conflict, were refugees or displaced persons or suffered as members of minorities or of indigenous peoples. The plague of international terrorism threatened the very fabric of international order and created an environment conducive to violations of human rights. In the name of conscience and human solidarity, international terrorism, based on co...empt for human life, must be denounced and eradicated. At the end of every session of the Commission, its members must ask themselves if they had always acted in good conscience and whether, in keeping with the ideals of the United Nations and with its position in the international human rights community, the Commission had played its part and done its utmost to ensure that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was fully respected.

60. It was essential to modernize the Commission and all its members should consider how the performance of the Commission and the human rights programmes could be improved. The quest for modernization must, however, fully respect the principles of international law and the Commission's own rules. A key aspect must be the implementation of the international human rights treaties and the Commission must discuss how best to promote their full implementation by exchanging experience and sharing good practices.

61. Creation of a universal culture of human rights in the future required the education of the young and he urged members to take a close look at how successful the efforts undertaken in the context of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education had been.

62. The Commission had a heavy workload before it, including many contentious issues and he stressed that, for the session to be fruitful and productive, members must commit themselves to constructive and respectful dialogue. Inflammatory or insulting language must be avoided and participants must recall that the Commission's purpose was to solve problems, not aggravate difficulties. In the past, public attention and media coverage had focused primarily on difficult deliberations on country resolutions. That was understandable, since States had treaty obligations to respect human rights and violations of human rights thus often implied violations by States, which the Commission had a duty to deal with. However, there were many urgent general issues such as poverty, the rights of women, children and vulnerable groups, development, etc.. on the agenda also and efforts to protect, strengthen and promote all human rights would help to alleviate the burden of such problems and thus, to some extent, reduce suffering and strengthen solidarity.

63. Delegations should approach the Commission's work in a spirit of mutual goodwill and commitment to human rights. For his part, he would do his utmost to ensure success for the Commission's fifty-eighth session and looked forward to having the support of all participants to that end.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 2 of the provisional agenda) (E/CN.4/2002/1 and Add.1 and 2)

64. The CHAIRPERSON drew attention to the provisional agenda (E/CN.4/2002/1) prepared by the Secretary-General pursuant to rule 5 of the rules of procedure.

65. The agenda was adopted.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.